

Decision Point Tactics During the Defense

Fighting the Enemy,
Not the Plan



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This is the second article in a two-part series on the use of decision point tactics by the opposing force (OPFOR) at the National Training Center (NTC). (See "Decision Point Tactics in the Meeting Battle," *INFANTRY*, January-February 1997, pages 28-35.)

The NTC's move to full-time brigade operations—along with changes to OPFOR doctrine and advances in training systems—has brought about a major change in the way the OPFOR fights. These factors have led to tactics that rely more on maneuver and finesse than on firepower. Decision point tactics evolved as a technique for executing these changes.

As explained in the first article, decision point tactics depend upon four imperatives: battlefield vision, successful reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance operations, well-trained crews and platoons, and effective deception opera-

tions. The following discussion of these imperatives applies to defensive operations of units that have a security zone mission:

Battlefield Vision

The OPFOR commander and his staff must have a shared vision of the battlefield throughout the battle. Besides continual experience in realistic combat-like conditions, the primary means of gaining battlefield vision is through the use of the deliberate decision making process, especially the wargaming portion.

METT-T Analysis. Although a full intelligence preparation of the battlefield is needed for a full appreciation of decision point tactics, an analysis of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time) can summarize some of the more important considerations for these tactics during the defense.

Since an inaccurate analysis leads to invalid results, the analysis should include several alternatives and options, all of which include the enemy perspective:

- **Mission**—The security zone is force-oriented with tasks to either delay, disrupt, or destroy the attacking enemy forces. The large sector associated with the security zone also implies that the defending force must maneuver to achieve mass against the attacking force. Consequently, maneuver decision points are developed from expected enemy actions.

- **Enemy**—During a security zone mission, the enemy has the initiative, and the size of the sector normally gives him many options, both in the formations he may employ and in the avenues of approach available. Key decision points are triggered on the basis of these two variables. Since the security zone, by design, is a high-risk mission, it is important to identify and wargame all potential enemy courses of action (COAs), not just the top three.

The unit's training level, like its ability to execute battle drills, is another critical factor that must be analyzed. The Blue force (BLUFOR) commander remains the hardest element to analyze, and a complete analysis normally requires several battles. Some considerations of the enemy commander include: his ability to make quick decisions and communicate them to subordinates; his preferred tactics (two abreast; one up, one back); his rate of movement; and his use of combat multipliers. The OPFOR recognizes that enemy actions influence the way we fight, and on the battlefield, the enemy always gets a vote.

For the sample scenario, enemy forces consisted of two task forces with a combined combat potential of 58 M1A1s and 68 M2s (10 of which were Bradley Stinger fighting vehicles), along with 150 dismounts. Reconnaissance assets included 20 scout HMMWVs (high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles) and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The UAV poses some unique problems. The OPFOR motorized rifle battalion (MRB) could set out counterreconnaissance against the scouts but could actively do nothing to hinder the UAV (a rules-of-engagement shortfall that has since been corrected). Deception, however, might work well against it. The MRB needs to show the enemy what he wants to see. Since this was the first battle of the rotation, little information was available on the brigade commander's fighting preferences. Still, the unit's reputation from previous rotations indicated a unit that could move quickly, fight well, and adequately integrate its combat multipliers. In short, it would be prudent not to accept risk initially, because the enemy had shown the ability to take advantage of opportunities. The analysis also identified seven potential enemy COAs against the initial positions and two against subsequent positions.

- **Terrain**—The commander and staff must completely review the NTC's terrain, especially in terms of time and space, both of which are especially critical for the security zone. The doctrinal depth for an MRB security zone ranges from 20 to 50 kilometers for the width and 5 to 10 kilometers. Normal OPFOR sector size ranges from 20 to 30

kilometers deep and 6 to 20 kilometers wide. The attacking force has the initial advantage because it dictates the initial area of battle. The OPFOR will attempt to visualize these areas and then determine how to make the best use of the terrain to delay, disrupt, or destroy the enemy.

The more significant terrain factors the OPFOR examines during the security zone include the identification of all possible maneuver routes, choke points, intervisibility lines, and key and decisive terrain features that could help delay, disrupt, or destroy an enemy force. The way the enemy will use this same terrain is always considered as well in this analysis.

For the sample scenario, the MRB commander conducted the following terrain analysis (see terrain orientation map in Figure 1): The sector is 20 kilometers at its widest point, and the distance from the forward line of troops to the rear boundary is 29 kilometers. An examination of the sector reveals that the first defensible terrain runs roughly north and south from Brown Pass and Debnam Pass to Hill 899. The terrain to the west is indefensible because another hill mass splits the sector. By establishing initial positions just east of this terrain, the MRB is able to establish fire sacks on the reverse slope and at natural choke points.

The sector chokes down to approximately seven kilometers in the vicinity of the Iron Triangle, Hill 780, and Chod Hill. Major avenues of approach include Brown and Debnam Passes, the Colorado Wash, and the south wall near Hill 899. The approach in the north is flat and fast while the approach south along the Washboard is broken and slow. Key terrain includes the Goat Trail, Brown Pass, Debnam Pass, Colorado Wash, Hill 899, and Hidden Valley. All of the key terrain represents major avenues of approach or areas vital to flank security. Decisive terrain in this case was identified as the Iron Triangle and Hill 780. If these two pieces of terrain were lost, the enemy would be able to place direct fires on the first-echelon defense.

- **Troops**—The OPFOR must consider the capabilities and limitations of its own personnel and of the augmenting units as well. Upgrades to OPFOR and BLUFOR battlefield

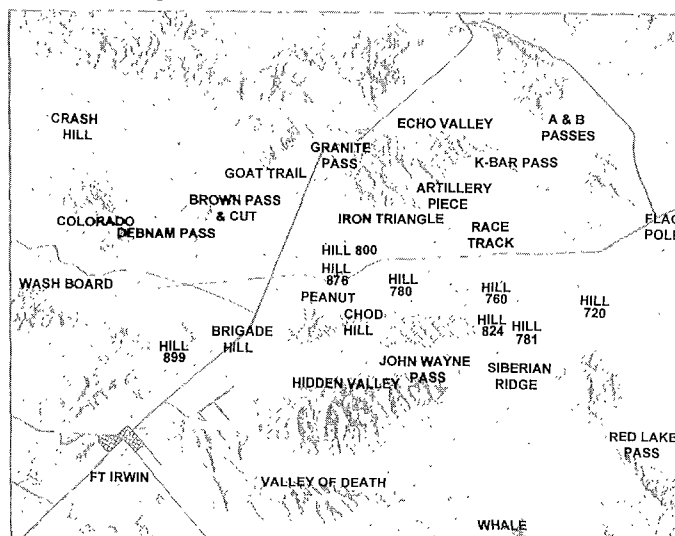


Figure 1. Common NTC terrain feature names.

training systems—MILES II and SAWE (simulated area weapons effect)—are in a state of flux, and units are still trying to determine the limitations and capabilities of these new systems. Future training system upgrades will continue to change this analysis.

For the sample scenario, the MRB consisted of four motorized rifle companies (MRCs) with a combat potential of 13 T-80s and 36 BMP 2s. Also attached were three AT-5s (antitank missile BRDMs), two 2A45s (antitank guns), and 200 infantrymen. Veteran MRC commanders would command the initial positions, and their companies would be doing most of the displacing and maneuvering. The more junior MRC commanders would defend subsequent positions. AT-5s would be critical to the withdrawal because of their long engagement range capabilities. Finally, because this would be the first fight for the OPFOR's augmentee infantrymen, the MRB commander limited their movement requirements and placed them in strong flank positions along critical avenues of approach.

- **Time**—Analyzing different aspects of time is absolutely critical to proper decision point tactics, especially with a large sector and the requirement to withdraw to subsequent positions. Additionally, the requirement to delay, which is time-specific, drives the criteria for and the method of fighting. A commander is forced to balance preserving the force with attempting to gain more time at a particular battle position. Some key considerations include movement times for both enemy and friendly forces on specific routes, movement from hide positions, and the time required to employ special munitions such as smoke, chemical agents, and FASCAM (family of scatterable mines).

For the sample scenario, the mission required the MRB to delay enemy forces for 18 hours. This length of time, coupled with the relatively shallow sector depth and the expected aggressive enemy attack, forced the MRB to plan on a force destruction task and not to assume the enemy would be halted with limited engagements and losses. Until an actual rehearsal could be conducted on the ground, the estimate of withdrawal times from seven minutes to 15 minutes was based on terrain analysis and experience.

Enemy rates of march were estimated to be much faster on an approach march north of the hill mass above the Washboard than south of it because of the rough terrain in the Washboard itself. The MRB would therefore have much less time to react to an attack through Brown or Debnam Pass than to an attack across the Washboard (30 minutes travel time on northern avenues and 60 minutes over the Washboard). Because movement out of hide positions would take five to ten minutes, an early read on the enemy's approach would be necessary.

Finally, because of the amount of time it takes to strike-warn (SW) (notify friendly units) and fire FASCAM and persistent chemicals (30 and 45 minutes, respectively), decision points for each would have to be established. The MRB was given 36 hours to complete all preparations (including the digging of all one-tier and two-tier fighting positions as well as emplacing all obstacles) followed by rehearsals.

Wargaming. Since security zone operations must consider all possible enemy COAs, the wargame for these missions takes a lot more time. Each course of action must be wargamed, and the conditions needed to execute decision point tactics are identified during this process. The belt wargame technique was used for the sample scenario, and two major battle zones were identified.

Rehearsals. More emphasis is placed on rehearsals than on the actual order. Well-conducted rehearsals ensure that everyone understands his role in the plan as well as the timelines and critical decision points for each course of action.

Reconnaissance/Counterreconnaissance

Without good reconnaissance it would be impossible to execute decision point tactics. The regimental reconnaissance element normally "owns" the first decision point, which is the identification of unit formations and avenues of approach. Since subsequent decision points occur throughout the actual execution of the battle, the reconnaissance reporting process is continuous. Because both forces are maneuvering, it is absolutely critical that reconnaissance assets identify the way enemy forces react either to OPFOR maneuver or deception operations. This process will trigger subsequent decision point maneuver options. Counterreconnaissance operations throughout the sector are necessary to hinder the enemy's decision-making process and further enhance deception operations.

Well-Trained Crews and Platoons

Decision point tactics during security zone battles require decentralized execution. To do this, every unit must have crews and platoons that can react on short notice and execute simple battle drills, navigate, and report accurately. The OPFOR's success in executing security zone operations is based primarily on its well-trained crews and platoons.

Effective Deception Operations

Deception is especially critical for security zone battles. The OPFOR uses deception turrets, deception obstacles, and many other techniques to achieve its goals. Effective deception positions can force the enemy to deploy early and commit resources and combat multipliers, which in turn buys time.

The key to successful deception operations is to confirm the BLUFOR S-2s template. If the S-2's reconnaissance identifies templated forces or obstacles, he is more apt to accept the read, even if it is not totally substantiated. Deception electronic warfare (EW) traffic is also developed to reinforce visual deception operations; the use of fires and smoke helps this process.

Example Battle (Security Zone)

Mission: 3d MRB, 32d Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (MRR) establishes a security zone not later than 19XXX96 to delay enemy forces until 201400XXX96 in order to allow the first echelon MRB to complete the development of the division main defensive belt.

initial sets and main task and purpose for each major subordinate element. Subsequent COA descriptions only address changes to the initial sets:

1st MRC (2 T80s/8 BMPs): Initial: Set BP 3-2; Task—Delay brigade; Purpose—To allow 4th MRB time to prepare first-echelon defense. Remain in hide positions during the Zone 1 fight.

2d MRC (3/8): Initial: Set BP 3-1; Task—Reduce lead TF; purpose: To allow no more than five company/teams to penetrate PL R2.

3d MRC (3/6): Initial: Set BP 3-3; Task—Reduce lead TF; purpose: to allow no more than five company/teams to penetrate PL R2.

4th MRC (3/8): Initial: Set BP 1-1. Task—Delay brigade; purpose—to give 4th MRB time to prepare first-echelon defense. Remain in hide positions during Zone 1 fight.

Antitank company (ATC)

AT5s: Initial: Sets firing lines E2, G3, G6.

Task—Destroy lead TF forces. Purpose—To allow 3-1 and 3-3 to withdraw.

2A45s: Initial: Set I1. Task—Destroy enemy forces; purpose—to protect flank of BP 3-2.

Reserve (1/2): Initial: Set R1. Task—Reinforce designated BP; purpose: to prevent penetration of BP or assist in withdrawal.

Goat Infantry (30): Initial: Set A9 (Goat Trail). Block Goat Trail to protect flanks of BPs 3-3, 6-3.

Rampage Infantry (70): Initial: Set I1; Task—Block 114 Wadi. Purpose: To prevent envelopment of BP 3-2.

Angel Infantry (100): Initial: Sets I2 (30), I3 (70). Task: Disrupt enemy formations; purpose: to protect flank of BP 1-1.

Fires: Initial SWs—Persistent chemical—target 601 FASCAM #1—target 922 and #2—target 923, nonpersistent #1—vicinity Debnam, #2—Colorado, #3—TBD, SOKOL—on call, close air support (CAS)—on station 0630. (Note that all fires are initially to reduce lead TF and then provide separation of TFs to facilitate withdrawal of forces from their initial positions.)

Zone 1:

COA 1 (Northern "L") (Enemy COAs 1 and 2—BELL TOWER and DALLAS).

1st MRC (2/8): Remain in BP 3-2 hide positions during Zone 1 fight.

2d MRC (3/8): On order (O/O), move, occupy, and fight BPs 4-3A (2/6) and 4-3B (1/2) to destroy at least three company teams from the first task force. O/O withdraw and fight BP 6-1 to continue attrition of lead and second task force. Position a mobile obstacle detachment (MOD) in front of BP 4-3A if enemy comes through Brown Pass (enemy COA 1) or in front of firing line E3 if the enemy comes through Debnam Pass (enemy COA 2).

4th MRC (3/8): Remain in hide positions during Zone 1 fight. Retain minelaying equipment for Zone 2 fight.

ATC

AT5s: Remain and fight E2 and G3, O/O G6 moves and

fight from E6.

2A45s: Remain and fight I1.

Reserve (1/2): Remain in initial set.

Goat Infantry (30): Remain and fight A9. O/O withdrawal to I1.

Rampage Infantry (70): Remain and fight I1.

Angel Infantry (100): Remain and fight I2 and I3.

Fires: Fires COAs 1 and 2)

- Fires COA 1 (enemy COA 1—BELL TOWER): Fire persistent chemical target 601; shoot FASCAM #1, target 922 on second company/team, lead TF. SW and O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 999. SW and O/O shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF in Brown Pass. Fire second nonpersistent chemical on second TF to facilitate withdrawal. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Old Harry/Hill 1141 to facilitate withdrawal. O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams of lead TF west of Brown Pass. Intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW) jams artillery and command and control nets.

- Fires COA 2 (enemy COA 2—DALLAS): SW and O/O fire persistent chemical target 602; restrikewarn (RSW) and shoot FASCAM 1, target 923 between TFs. O/O shoot FASCAM 2, target 923 on second company/team, lead TF. O/O shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF in Debnam. Fire second nonpersistent chemical on second TF to facilitate withdrawal. O/O position SOKOL to backstop Hill 910 to facilitate withdrawal. O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams of lead TF west of Debnam Pass. IEW jams artillery and command and control nets.

Decision Point Conditions to Execute COA 1 and Withdrawal Criteria:

- BLUFOR COA 1 or 2.

- Withdrawal if three or more BLUFOR company teams are destroyed, less than a 4/10 OPFOR remains combat effective, and break in contact is possible.

COA 2 (Southern "L") (Enemy COA 4—ALAMO)

1st MRC (2/8): Remain in BP 3-2 hide positions during Zone 1 fight.

2d MRC (3/8): Remain and fight BP 3-1 O/O withdraw and fight BP 6-1 to continue attrition of lead and second task force.

3d MRC (3/6): Move, occupy, and fight BP 5-1A. O/O withdraw and fight BP 7-3. Emplace MOD in front of BP 5-1A if enemy comes along south wall (Enemy COA 6).

4th MRC (3/8): Remain in hide positions during Zone 1 fight. Hold UMZ for zone 2 fight.

ATC

AT5s: Remain and fight G6 and G3, O/O E2 moves and fights from 5-1A.

2A45s: Remain and fight I1.

Reserve (1/2): Remain in initial set.

Goat Infantry (30): O/O withdrawal to I1.

Rampage Infantry (70): Remain and fight I1.

Angel Infantry (100): Remain and fight I2 and I3.

Fires: Fires COA 6 (Enemy COA 6—ALAMO): SW and O/O shoot persistent chemical target 600; SW and O/O shoot FASCAM #1, target 901 on second company/team, lead TF. SW and O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 998. SW and O/O

shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF vicinity 899 (ALAMO). SW and O/O fire second nonpersistent chemical on second TF vicinity ALAMO to facilitate withdrawal. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Hill 899 to facilitate withdrawal. O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams of lead TF west of Hill 899. IEW jams artillery and command and control (C2) nets.

Decision Point Conditions to Execute COA #2 and Withdrawal Criteria:

- BLUFOR COA 4.
- Withdrawal if three or more BLUFOR company/teams are destroyed, less than a 4/10 OPFOR remains combat effective and break in contact is possible.

COA #3 (Withdraw) (Enemy COAs 3, 5, 6, 7—two TFs abreast, both in the Colorado Wash.

1st MRC (2/8): Remain in BP 3-2 hide positions during Zone 1 fight.

2d MRC (3/8): O/O delay with 1 motorized rifle platoon (MRP) (1/2) from BP 3-1, remainder (2/6) withdraws and fights from BP 6-1.

3d MRC (3/6): O/O delay with 1 MRP from BP 5-3, remainder (2/6) withdraws and fights from 6-3. Emplace MOD along western end of BP 6-3.

4th MRC (3/8): Remain in hide positions during Zone 1 fight. Hold UMZ for zone 2 fight.

ATC

AT5s: Remain and fight E2, G6, and G3, and cover withdrawal of lead MRCs.

2A45s: Remain and fight I1.

Reserve (1/2): Remain in initial set.

Goat Infantry (30): Remain and fight A9. O/O withdrawal to I1.

Rampage Infantry (70): Remain and fight I1.

Angel Infantry (100) I2 and I3.

Fires:

- Fires COA 3 (Enemy COA 3—WACO) SW and O/O fire persistent chemical target 699; SW and shoot FASCAM #1, target 999. SW and O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 914. O/O shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF in WACO. RSW and fire second nonpersistent chemical on 2d TF. SOKOL held for Zone 2 fight. O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams of lead TF west in WACO. IEW jams artillery and C2 nets.

- Fires COA 5 (Enemy COA 3—BELL TOWER/DALLAS): Fire persistent chemical target 601; shoot FASCAM #1, target 922 on second company/team, lead TF. O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 923. O/O shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF in Debnam Pass. RSW and fire second nonpersistent chemical on second TF in Debnam. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Old Harry/Hill 1141 to facilitate withdrawal. O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams of lead TF west of Debnam and Brown passes. IEW jams artillery and C2 nets.

- Fires COA 6 (Enemy COA 6—WACO/ALAMO) SW and O/O fire persistent chemical target 600; SW and shoot FASCAM #1, target 999. SW and O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 914. O/O shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF in

WACO. SW and fire second nonpersistent chemical on second TF on ALAMO. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Hill 899 to facilitate withdrawal. O/O CAS attacks to reduce or delay TFs in WACO and ALAMO. IEW jams artillery and C2 nets.

- Fires COA 7 (Enemy COA 7—WACO/DALLAS) Hold 601 or SW and O/O fire persistent chemical target 699; SW FASCAM #1, target 996. O/O shoot nonpersistent chemical on lead TF in WACO. O/O second nonpersistent chemical on second TF in DALLAS or RSW on TF in WACO. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Hill 141 to facilitate withdrawal. O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams of TFs in WACO and DALLAS. IEW jams artillery and C2 nets.

Decision point conditions to execute COA #3 withdrawal:

- BLUFOR COAs 3, 5, 6, 7—Two task forces abreast.
- Withdraw if situation does not allow the massing of two MRCs against one task force.

Zone 2:

COA #1 (South-Chod/Peanut Pass)

1st MRC (2/8): Occupy and fight BP 3-2, reconstitute reserve (1/2).

2d MRC (3/8): Remaining forces occupy and fight BP 6-1. O/O fight G5 or BP 7-1.

3d MRC (3/6): Remaining forces occupy and fight BP 7-3. B/P to reconstitute reserve (1/2).

4th MRC (3/8): O/O occupy and fight BP 1-1. O/O emplace UMZ.

ATC

AT5s: Move from E2 and G3 to BP 1-1, G6 to north of I3.

2A45s: One system remains and fights I1, O/O move one system to H2.

Reserve (1/2): O/O occupy and fight H2.

Goat Infantry (30): Withdraw to I1.

Rampage Infantry (70): Move 60 Infantry to BP 1-1, remaining forces fight I1.

Angel Infantry (100): Remain and fight I2 and I3.

Fires: If available, O/O shoot FASCAM #1, target 914. If available, SW and O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 999. If available, SW and O/O shoot third nonpersistent chemical west of Peanut/Chod Gap. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Chod Hill. If available O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams west of Peanut/Chod Gap. IEW continue to jam artillery and C2 nets.

Decision point conditions to execute COA 1:

- BLUFOR COA south toward Chod/Peanut Gap.

COA 2 (North-Iron Triangle):

1st MRC (2/8): Occupy and fight BP 3-2.

2d MRC (3/8): Remaining forces withdraw to and fight BP 7-1.

3d MRC (3/6): Remaining forces withdraw to and fight BP 6-3. O/O occupy and fight BP 7-3. B/P to reconstitute reserve (1/2).

4th MRC (3/8): Occupy and fight BP 1-1; reconstitute reserve (1/2).

ATC

AT5s: E2 moves and fights G1, G3 moves and fights

SECURITY ZONE	INI SW	CoA 1	CoA 2	CoA 3	CoA 4	CoA 5	CoA 6	CoA 7
F-Fire CoAs								
Enemy CoA		1 up/1 back	1 up/1 back	1 up/1 back	1 up/1 back	2 Abreast	2 Abreast	2 Abreast
Route		Brown Pass	Debnam	Colorado	Waco	Alamo	Colorado/89	Waco/Dallas
Pers Chem	601	shoot 601	RSW 802 Time: 45 min	SW 899 Time: 45 min	SW 600 Time: 45 min	shoot 601	SW 600 Time: 45 min	Hold 601 or SW 600
FASCAM #1	922	shoot 922	SW 923 Time: 45 min	SW 999 Time: 45 min	SW 901 Time: 45 min	shoot 922	SW 999 Time: 45 min	SW 999 Time: 45 min
FASCAM #2	923	SW 999 Time: 45 min	shoot 923	SW 814 Time: 45 min	SW 998 Time: 45 min	shoot 923	SW 814 Time: 45 min	shoot 923
NONPERS CHEM 1	Deb	SW Brown	shoot Debnam	shoot Colo	SW Alamo	shoot Debnam	shoot Colo	Hold Deb or SW Colo
NONPERS CHEM 2	Pass	SW Brown	Hold Colo	RSW Colo	SW Alamo	RSW Debnam	RSW Colo	Hold Deb or SW Colo
NONPERS CHEM 3	Wadi	Time: 30 min		Time: 30 min	Time: 30 min	Time: 30 min	Time: 30 min	SW Colo
NONPERS CHEM 4	no sys avail	SW Brown	RSW Debnam	RSW Colo	SW Alamo	RSW Debnam	RSW Colo	Hold Deb or SW Colo
SOKOL	TOC	Old Harry	Backstop	3 Slaters	699	Old Harry	Hold for zone 2	Old Harry
CAS	IP 0630	Brown Pass	Debnam	Colorado	899	Debnam	Colorado/89	Debnam/Colo
IEW		Arty/C2	Arty/C2	Arty/C2	Arty/C2	Arty/C2	Arty/C2	Arty/C2
KEY								
SW-Strikewarn	RSW- Re-strikewarn	Colo-Colorado	Deb-Debnam					

Figure 4. Decision support matrix (fires).

north of BP 1-1, G6 moves and fights H1.

2A45s: Remain and fight I1.

Reserve (1/2): O/O occupy and fight G1.

Goat Infantry (30): O/O withdraw to I1.

Rampage Infantry (70): Remain and fight I1.

Angel Infantry (100): Move 60 infantry to G1, remaining infantry fights I2 and I3.

Fires: If available, O/O shoot FASCAM #1, target 999. If available, RSW and O/O shoot FASCAM #2, target 999. If available, SW and O/O shoot third nonpersistent chemical west of Hill 876. O/O position SOKOL vicinity Iron Triangle. If available O/O CAS attacks to reduce trail teams west of Hill 76. IEW continues to jam artillery and C2 nets.

Decision point conditions to execute COA 2:

• BLUFOR Co A north toward Iron Triangle.

These COAs were converted to a decision support matrix to simplify execution decisions.

Special Munitions Decisions

Although special munitions play a significant role in security zone operations, they are limited assets and therefore require decision points. The MRB was allocated one persistent target, six lines of nonpersistent, and two FASCAM minefields. The employment of these assets is time sensitive and requires between 30 and 45 minutes to restrikewarn on a new target. Units were strikewarned on the initial targets to cover almost all of the potential enemy COAs. The purpose was to contribute to the direct firefight or delay enemy forces and facilitate MRC maneuvers. The initial persistent chemical strikewarn target was 601 (Brown Pass), FASCAM targets 922 (Brown Pass) and 923 (Debnam Pass), and nonpersistent targets in Debnam Pass and Colorado Wash. Artillery systems were not available initially to strikewarn additional nonpersistent targets.

If the brigade chose to attack abreast, either all special munitions would be fired at once to facilitate a break in contact or the regiment would shoot a combination that would break the enemy's momentum and allow the MRB to set the conditions for the decisive point. FASCAM 923 was critical because Brown Pass was the fastest enemy avenue of ap-

proach. The FASCAM could buy time to set the L-shaped engagement area or to fire persistent chemical 601. In both cases, it would help separate the lead TF by shooting the chemical between company teams. Terrain would slow any movement over the Washboard; therefore, the nonpersistents were initially strikewarned in Colorado Wadi (sometimes called Wash) and Debnam Pass. The details of our other special munitions triggers for all seven COAs are shown in the artillery decision support matrix (Figure 4).

Execution of Decision Point Tactics

First Decision Point (Figure 5). Division reconnaissance reported one task force up and one back with the lead task force moving along axis DALLAS at a moderate rate of ad-

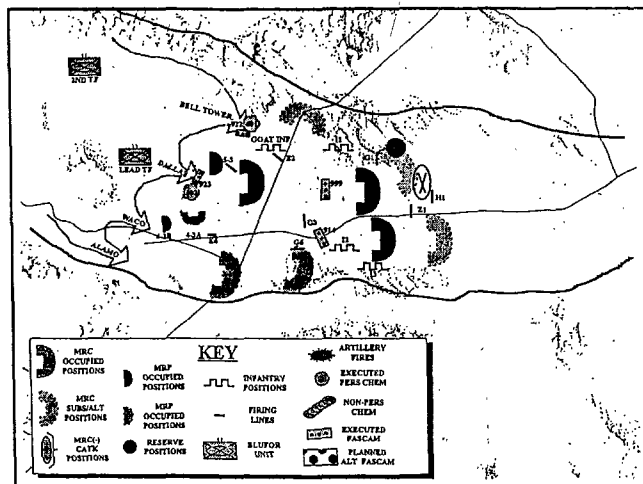


Figure 5. First decision point, COA 1.

vance. The second TF's initial orientation was along BELL TOWER. The MRB commander decided to execute COA 1, DALLAS option. BP 3-1 repositioned to BP 4-3A (2/6) to set bottom portion of the "L" and BP 4-3B (1/2) as flank security. The AT5 vicinity G6 also repositioned vicinity E6 to overwatch engagement area east of Debnam. BP 5-3 continued to hold, awaiting the final read on the second task force.

Additionally, the regimental commander strikewarned

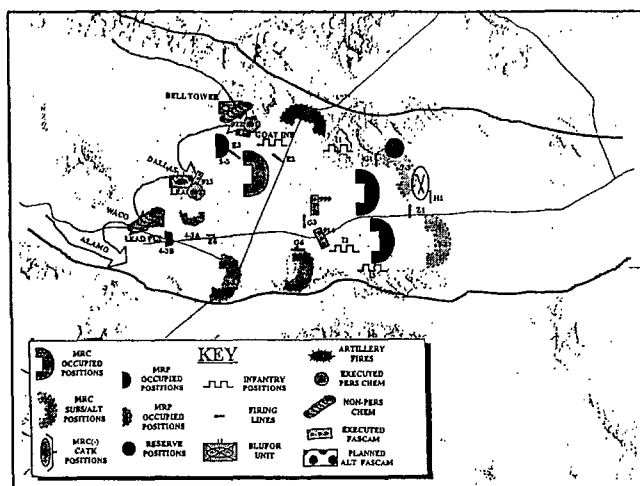


Figure 6. Second decision point, MRC withdrawal.

Second Decision Point (Figure 6). The lead team of the lead task force entered Debnam Pass, which was blanketed in BLUFOR smoke. The deception positions in Debnam Pass, smoke and fires from BP 5-3, and regimental reconnaissance BMPs caused the lead team and the task force to halt their forward movement. The BLUFOR commander had the lead team with engineers continue to look for a bypass to the deception tank ditch in Debnam Pass. Heavy BLUFOR smoke caused the OPFOR scout to trigger the execution of FASCAM 923 too early, causing the FASCAM to land in front of the lead team instead of on the fourth team. Faced with the FASCAM and the perceived forces in Debnam Pass, the BLUFOR commander ordered the lead task force to leave one team in Debnam Pass with engineers while diverting the remaining teams through an adjacent cut into the Colorado Wadi. This maneuver exposed the flank of BP 4-3A. Additionally, the time delay by the lead task force caused the second task force to come abreast oriented on BELL TOWER.

The lead task force in Colorado was initially delayed by nonpersistent chemicals and BP 4-3B, which destroyed the lead platoon, losing one BMP in the process. In reaction, the task force maneuvered into the persistent chemical. CAS, artillery, and persistent chemical fires reduced two company teams from this task force, also allowing the forces remaining in 4-3B to withdraw to BP 3-1. BP 3-1 then withdrew to BP 6-1. The second task force was delayed in Brown Pass by fires, nonpersistent chemicals, and the brigade identification of obstacles near BP 3-3. This delay allowed the platoon in BP 3-3 to withdraw to BP 6-3 without coming under direct-fire contact.

Third Decision Point (Figure 7). Recognizing that the OPFOR had withdrawn, the brigade committed its second task force toward the Peanut/Chod Gap. The first task force continued to reorganize after running into the persistent chemical and direct fires from BP 4-3B. This task force had about a company team (plus) remaining. In response, the



The commander first withdrew one MRP from GBP 6-1 to 7-1. He also committed the reserve from R1 to H2 and ordered BP 3-2 to reconstitute a 1/2 reserve. Because of enemy orientation, the commander decided to have BP 6-3 and Goat Infantry (TF Rampage) remain in place. The AT5s at G6 and G3 continued to cover the withdrawal and significantly reduced the lead two company teams of the second task force. The AT 5 at G3 then withdrew to Z1.

At this point, the execution of the operation was turned over to the cross-talking MRC commanders with the MRB



and regimental command posts eavesdropping and supporting the operations with fires and other combat multipliers. The brigade, unaware of the threat to its northern flank, continued to push through the Peanut/Chod Gap. Direct fires from BP 1-1, G6, I2, and I3, and the enveloping MRC from BP 6-3 coupled with indirect fires eventually destroyed the remaining brigade forces.

Effects of Deception

Often the OPFOR does not know the full effects of deception operations. In this case, the staff learned after the rotation that deception and preconceived beliefs significantly affected the BLUFOR plan and execution. One of the main ways of achieving deception goals is to reinforce the preconceived beliefs of the BLUFOR S-2s and commanders.

In this particular case, the S-2 believed that the OPFOR never fought a security zone with initial and subsequent positions as outlined in doctrine but instead held and fought in just one location. The S-2 had templated an OPFOR defense in the vicinity of Iron Triangle, Hill 876, Hill 780, and Chod Hill. This template was reinforced by the UAV's detection of logistics operations, coordination meetings, and preparation of BP 3-2 and 1-1 activity in that area. Although activity was detected in and behind the passes, this element was written off as a screening force that would displace before fighting. And although some intelligence sources indicated otherwise, the brigade continued to believe that the fight would be a single-echelon defensive battle. It was not until the division maximum engagement line (MEL) feed, four hours before LD, that the brigade realized there would be serious resistance in the vicinity of the passes. By then it was too late to change the plan. As a result, the brigade's plan was flawed from the start.

The MRB commander prepared a platoon deception position with turret hulls and a shallow tank ditch to initially show strength in Debnam Pass and try to influence the brigade commander to avoid this avenue of approach; however, this actually worked against the OPFOR. The brigade had a plan, and it ignored intelligence reports in the passes, regarding them as screening operations. Therefore, the brigade's maneuver plan was not influenced by the deception effort until they got into the passes. During execution, the deception positions delayed the enemy as planned, but the early firing of the FASCAM actually forced the lead task force to maneuver out of the developing fire sack. This in turn forced the MRB commander to withdraw his forces earlier than desired.

There are two key points to this discussion. First, many units have preconceived ideas of how the OPFOR will fight and tend to believe their perceptions without evaluating the available information. In short, they fight their plan instead of the enemy. The OPFOR takes advantage of these errors. Second, deception operations are a two-edged sword that can work against a plan as well as support it. More often than not, they work very well if they are planned as part of an operation instead of as a mere afterthought.

Decision point tactics are essential to fighting the fluid battlefield conditions during the security zone battle. The four imperatives effectively summarize the successful execution of decision point tactics during the security zone mission:

- A unit must have good battlefield vision to clearly identify the conditions necessary to execute a specific decision. The complexity of the security zone battle maneuver plan necessitates a solid wargame and rehearsal process to help attain this vision.
- Successful reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance efforts are essential to identifying the decision point conditions and denying the same to the enemy.
- The OPFOR's highly trained crews and platoons are the foundation for the execution of decision point tactics. Without this capability, complex battlefield maneuver while in contact is impossible.
- Deception operations in support of the security zone battle are essential to gaining the time needed to get inside the enemy commander's decision cycle.

Decision point tactics are neither unique nor new, but they form the foundation for the OPFOR's successful execution during the security zone fight.

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